

TEACHING GOAL

To study the sins forbidden by the first commandment in order to avoid them.

DOCTRINAL STANDARDS

- Q. What is forbidden in the first commandment?
- A. The first commandment forbids the denying or not worshipping and glorifying the true God as God, and our God; and the giving of that worship and glory to any other, which is due to Him alone.
- Q. What are we specially taught by these words before Me in the first commandment?
- A. These words before Me in the first commandment teach us, that God, who sees all things, takes notice of, and is much displeased with, the sin of having any other God.

S.C. 47-48, L.C. 105-106, W.C. of F. XIX, Savoy 19, Young 81

SCRIPTURAL BASIS

Study Passage: Jeremiah 44:1-23

Support Passages: Psalms 14 and 53; Hebrews 11:6; Jeremiah 2:20-28

BIBLE STORY

Acts 19:23-41: Demetrius and the Silversmiths are put into chaos by God.

MEMORY ASSIGNMENT

Psalm 14:1

14:1 The fool has said in his heart, "*There is no God.*" They are corrupt, They have done abominable works, There is none who does good.

APPLICATION

It is very important to serve no other God than YAHWEH because He takes special notice of it and brings special wrath upon it.

SUMMARY

Demetrius, a Silversmith, had a thriving business in Ephesus making silver images of Artemis (named Diana by the Romans). With the arrival of the Apostle Paul, his business began to fall off dramatically because Paul was saying that, "gods made with hands are no gods at all".¹ Demetrius argued against Paul as follows: (1) Our prosperity depends on making these images. (2) Our trade will fall into disrepute. (3) The temple of Artemis will be regarded as worthless. (4) Artemis will be dethroned from her magnificence brought about because "all Asia and the world" worship her.

These are all pragmatic reasons for opposing Paul and his preaching. There was no interest in the truth nor was it of any consequence to him that he was worshipping the product of his own hands. Demetrius was, in effect, saying to a tree, "you are my father".² To argue that ones prosperity depends on idol making is to elevate prosperity above the idol itself.

By contrast, Christ offers no such emoluments. The disciples of Christ may well face hatred by the world, persecution and hardship. The rich man must sell all that he has and give it to the poor. Zaccheus must return the money he stole. It may be the lion's den or the fiery furnace or the Roman Arena. There may be a Job's testing. Should we sin against God that we might be prosperous? Prosperity is not man's chief end but glorifying and enjoying YAHWEH is. Prosperity, of course, flows from this but on God's terms. It is rather a prosperity based in the Law of God.

To argue that the magnificence of Artemis will be dethroned is manifestly unreasonable. In YAHWEH we are dealing with infinite excellence which must be revered. "That He who is the author of our being and giver of all our mercies; on whom we are absolutely dependent; to whom we are responsible; who is the rightful possessor of our souls and bodies; and whose will is the highest rule of duty, should be duly recognized by His creatures which from the nature of the case must be the highest duty of all rational beings."³

Israel lay in ruins⁴ due to their wickedness in serving other gods whom they had not known. The women of Israel were burning sacrifices to the "queen of heaven", and when apprised of this sin, they refused to listen.⁵ Of this, God took special notice and poured out His wrath upon Israel, and He made this fearsome statement, "Behold, I am watching over them for harm and not for good".⁶

¹ Acts 19:26

² Jeremiah 2:27

³ Charles Hodge, Systematic Theology, Wm. B. Erdmans Publishing Co., Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1965, Vol 3, p 279

⁴ Jeremiah 44

⁵ Jeremiah 44:16

⁶ Jeremiah 44:27

How often we accede to the influence of the majority! The whole nation worships Artemis and we do little or nothing of any relevance to oppose it. Let us be warned that God takes special notice of false worship and will just as surely ruin our nation as He did Israel.